

LOCAL NEWS

Worst airline pilot shortage in years causes issues for travelers

Brianna Andrews, Reporter, weekend anchor

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – Catching a flight this summer? Keep a backup plan.

Southwest and Delta are among the major airlines cutting back on hundreds to thousands of flights to compensate.

"I think it's the lifestyle in general of never being home being at the mercy of the airline telling you where you will live when you will go to work where you fly," said Ed Booth, News4Jax Aviation Expert.

Ed Booth has worked in aviation for 40 years. He calls this shortage the "perfect storm."

The root of the crisis began during the pandemic. Airlines handed out early retirement packages to thousands of pilots and other employees.

Now they're desperate to train and hire pilots.

"You have to be extremely careful because safety is at stake."

Regional carrier Republic Airways, which flies for American, Delta and United has petitioned for the U.S. government to consider a more intensive and advanced structured program high-tech option to train pilots.

This is the link to the petition

The Federal Aviation Administration would need to oversee and approve any changes made to training requirements.

"There has not been a major crash in over 20 years on a U-S airliner. I think the fear of the regulators is that we don't want to go back to where it was where your news stations in the 70s was reporting a U-S airliner down at least once a month," said Booth.

Between inflation and rising fuel costs becoming a pilot is very expensive.

According to ATP Flight School, it costs just under \$100,000 to become a pilot without any experience.

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Brianna Andrews

This native of the Big Apple joined the News4Jax team in July 2021.

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